

SILENT NIGHT

onechurch bigIdea small group discussion

When God is silent, we're tempted to think he's absent. That's why the Christmas story is so important. You can't separate the "Silent Night" of Christmas from the 400 years of Silent Nights between the Old and New Testaments. Christmas gives us a real, tangible, and historical hope. It reminds us that even when God is silent, He isn't absent.

BIG IDEA: God is not silent, He is waiting for us to Go from Red to Green.



Sometimes silence can be deafening. While everything and everyone around you is quiet, content and fast asleep, you sometimes toss and turn at night wondering why God seems distant. You struggle to remember the last time you heard His voice. You wrestle with the distance while at the same time yearn for that missing connection. Numerous questions roll through your mind, but the one you can't seem to answer is what God is doing by remaining silent.

If you're not careful, you can easily mistake silence with inactivity. This would be a mistake. Even in the midst of those quiet moments, God is still at work. Just think about a normal holiday season. We get wrapped up in wrapping gifts, holiday ads and decorations. We rush from Christmas party to Christmas party. We spend hours online trying to find the latest deal or sit mesmerized watching Christmas specials on TV. When there is noise all around us, it can be difficult to hear the quiet voice of God. We've got mixed messages coming at us in all different directions while the message that truly matters gets lost in all the commotion.

However, other times the silence can be self-imposed. Riddled with guilt we avoid God at all costs. Similar to the next-door neighbor whose Christmas lights we borrowed and never gave back, we attempt to stay out of God's way. We know we've been slack in spending time with God so we use that as an excuse to allow the distance to continue. We feel like we should do more before we ask Him to reconnect with us. We come up with a religious checklist that we need to mark off in order to even the score and be "right" with Him.

GETTING STARTED

1. How do you tell others about something you love? For example, your favorite restaurant or favorite sports team.
2. Do they get excited about what you love when you explain it to them?

DISCUSSION

1. Connection- Read Matthew 2:1-2
 - What are you pursuing in your life? What matters most to you?
 - The wise men found Jesus by navigating with the stars. What sorts of things in your life can God use as a connection to point others toward Jesus?

The first step to changing ourselves is not in what we know, but whom we know. Like Dave said, "When we try to change people, we will always fail". Jesus changes people. We just have to be the connection to get them there. God used the wise men where they were in life to bring them to Jesus where they needed to be.

- Who in your life do you need to connect to Jesus?
2. Challenge- Read Matthew 2:3-9
- When we realize the power and authority of Jesus, we are challenged to change. How have you been challenged to change since knowing Jesus?
 - How can you use how Jesus has changed you to challenge others to change?
 - Often, we are discouraged if we don't see change right away when challenging others. King Herod challenged the wise men to go find Jesus and it took up to two years. I'm sure there were many times the wise men wanted to give up, but in the end the reward was far greater than the journey it took to get there.
 - Who in your life do you need to keep challenging and not give up on?
3. Change- Read Matthew 2:10-12
- How has God shown that His plans are better than your plans? What will it take for you to trust Him with your life plans?

Once the wise men traveled far and reached the house where Jesus was, they offered Him gifts. They gave Him what they treasured most. No matter what your past, Jesus changes people.

You can't follow Him and not be changed.

- Take this time to share your story of how Jesus changed you or someone you know through someone else inviting them to church or talking to them about Jesus.

When it came time for the wise men to leave, they adapted their travel plans because they didn't want to tell King Herod where Jesus was (for fear Herod might harm Jesus). When we spend time with Jesus and know Him more, our plans change. We experience a change of heart, or a change of mind, and we continue moving forward into the life God designed for us.

NEXT STEPS

Discuss what Next Steps each of you need to take this week and how you can support each other in those Next Steps.

- Is there someone that you feel you need to invest in and invite to church? Don't give up on them! There are no accidental relationships in your life and you have connections with others for a reason!
- One of the best ways to learn more about connecting with others and reaching them with the truth of the gospel is reading your Bible! Have you considered picking a youversion reading plan?

PRAYER

Praise God this week for loving us enough to save us forever!! Ask God to give you and your group the courage to be the star that leads people in your life to Jesus.

LEADER TIPS

Here are some great tips to help you encourage your group throughout the week:

1. Let your group know you are thankful for them in your life and are there for them no matter what they are facing through an email or text of encouragement.
2. Matthew 2 reminds us that Jesus reaches out to us by meeting us where we are in life. As leaders, it can become difficult when people that you lead don't seem to be taking the steps that you feel they should be taking. But Jesus didn't die for perfection, He died for salvation! Remember to lead with encouragement and patience this week. While members of your group may not be where they need to be in life, there is no where Jesus cannot reach them if you are willing to invest in them!